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TO THE Bishops and Clergy OF England and Wales,

*The State of the Cruel Persecution, Imprisonment (many to Death)
and Spoil of Goods inflicted upon the People called*

QUAKERS.

*Only for their Religious Meetings, and Obeying, Serving, and
Worshipping Almighty God that Made them.*

IN the Year 1680, a Brief Account of the sad Sufferings of the said People (from the Year 1660) was presented to King Charles the Second, and his Parliament, in Print, as followeth.

First, *That in that Time, according to Accounts then come to hand, there had died of the People called Quakers aforesaid, in Prison, and Prisoners, for the Exercise of their Faith and Conscience in Matters of Religion and Worship towards Almighty God; some of whom had been beaten and bruised, being knock'd down at their Peaceable Meetings, and died of their Wounds, to the Number of* 243.

Secondly, *That then remained in Prison in the several Goals in England and Wales for the Testimony of a good Conscience, (many of whom were Prosecuted by Writs of Excommunicato Cap. divers of them having been closely Confin'd, upon that Account, for several Years then past) in Number,* 276.

Thirdly, *The Number of those that had suffered Imprisonment for Meeting, and refusing, for Conscience-sake, to Swear, some of them having had the Sentence of a PRÆ-MUNIRE pass'd upon them, and divers had their Goods and Chattels Distrained and taken away, Viz.* 9437.

Fourthly, *The Number of the said People Excommunicated and Imprisoned for not Conforming to the Publick Worship (which were but a few in comparison to the many that have been so Prosecuted) Viz.* 624.

Fifthly, *Sentenc'd for Banishment, for Meeting together to Worship God: Viz.* 198.

And this Instant Year 1685, there was presented to King James the Second, the Account of present Prisoners for the Testimony of a good Conscience, and their Religious Meetings, in Obeying and Worshipping of God, to the Number of 1460.

With Account of Prisoners that died for their Faith and Worship, since the Account in 1680. 78.

The Number of all the said Sufferers, come to hand, amounting to 12316.

Note, That some of the present Prisoners are still continued upon the above said Account in 1680.

[And since, we have had Account of several more that are sent to Prison, & some more have died Prisoners.]

Besides many that have suffered Imprisonment since the Year 1680, and a great Number distrained upon, and their Goods spoiled, and made havock of by Informers (and some Priests have been Informers) for their Religious Peaceable Meetings, and not coming to the Parish-Worship; to the Ruine of many both in their Husbandry and Trade; some not having had a Bed left to lye upon, nor a stool to sit on, nor a Cow to give Milk for their poor Children, nor Corn for Bread, or Seed, or Drink, nor Tools to work withal, &c. The Value of which Goods so taken and made havock of, as well as the number of Sufferers upon the said Accounts, and by Imprisonments, is considerable (not here inserted.)

NOW let the Bishops and Clergy in England and Wales, consider the sad and cruel Sufferings by Imprisonment, (many to Death) and Spoil of Goods, as abovesaid, inflicted upon the People called Quakers for their Religious Meetings, and only for Obeying, Serving, and Worshipping Almighty God that made them. And were not your Fore-Fathers once Dissenters from the National Worship? And was it Just in them that Persecuted your Forefathers for not Conforming to the Sacrament of the Altar, and other things? And do not you now follow their Example that Persecuted your Fore-Fathers, in your Imprisoning and Persecuting Protestants for their tender Conscience-sake towards God, &c. And though there are many Sects and diversities of Orders among the Roman-Catholicks, and several Sorts and Sects were among the Jews (as you read in the Scriptures) yet Both were, and are kept from Persecuting one another among themselves. And therefore why should you that profess your selves Protestants, Persecute Protestants, or any, seeing that you have no such Command from Christ and his Apostles, but, *To love one another, and to love Enemies?* And, *Christ by the Grace of God, hath tasted Death for every Man:* So he has bought Mankind by his Death: And God would have all Men to be Saved: Therefore why should any Destroy them in their Lives or Estates by Imprisonment, because they cannot be of their Way? For Christ commands, *Let the Tares and the Wheat grow together till the Harvest:* which is the End of the World. And would the Bishops and Clergy be served so themselves, to be Cast into Prison till Death, and their Goods spoiled, for Worshipping and Serving God that Made them? Would they say, it was according to the Nobility of true Christianity, and the Royal Law of God, *To do unto others as they would have them do unto them?* Or, were that, *To love their Neighbour as themselves?* And is it not a sad thing, to see Protestants Destroy and Ruin Protestants, both by Imprisonment and in Estate! And therefore consider the Justness of the Lord, if he should suffer You to come under the same Punishment, how You then would stand to your own Principles, which you have forced others unto? and how You would bear the same Punishment you have inflicted upon others, for not following them? Therefore consider whilst God hath given you a Day, and a Visitation, to do good while you have Power; for if your Power should be taken away from you, then 'twill be too late for you to do good: For, *God will render to every one according to his Deeds.*

And doth not Tillotson, (one of your own Doctors) say in his Sermon on Luke 9. 55, 56. Preached the 5th. of November, 1678. (pag. 6, 7.) Viz. 'That there were those in the Primitive Times would have called for Fire to come down from Heaven to Destroy some that would not receive Christ; but Christ Rebuked them, telling them, *They knew not what Spirit they were of:* that is (says D. Tillotson) *Ye own your selves to be my Disciples, but do you consider what Spirit now Acts and Governs you? Not that surely which my Doctrine designs to mould and fashion you into, which is not a Furious, Persecuting and Destructive Spirit; but Mild, Gentle and Saving, Tender of the Lives and Interests of Men, even of those who are our greatest Enemies.* And further (pag. 7.) he says, *And now no Difference of Religion, no pretence of Zeal for God and Christ can Warrant and Justifie this Passionate and Fierce, this Vindictive and Exterminating Spirit; for the Son of Man came not to Destroy Mens Lives, but to Save them.* (Thus far Doctor T.)

Now let the Bishops and Clergy consider how many hundred Mens Lives have been destroyed by Imprisonment through them? And how many hundreds have been made Widows and Fatherless thereby? And how many hundreds have been Ruined in their Persons and Estates since the Year 1660, through their's and the Clergy-Mens means, for Obeying, Serving, and Worshipping God that made them?

And whereas it hath been often alledged to us, that the Apostle Paul says, *Let every Soul be subject to the Higher Power, &c.* And that Peter says, *Submit your selves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the King as Supreme, or unto Governours sent by him for the Punishment of Evil-Doers, and the Praise of them that do well,* 1 Pet. 2. And as Paul says, *Knowing that the Law is not made for the Righteous Man, but for the Lawless, Disobedient, Ungodly, Sinners, Unholy and Profane, for Murderers of Fathers and of Mothers, and for Manslayers, for Whoremongers, and for them that defile themselves with Mankind, for Lyars and perjured Persons, &c.* Now these were the Evil-Doers which are to be punished, 1 Tim. 1. And as the Apostles say, *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Power, and to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, who are for the Punishment of Evil-Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.* The Apostle doth not say, That every Soul should be subject to the higher Power, and to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, for Punishment of People for Serving and Worshipping of God in Matters of Faith, Religion and Worship: For Christ and the Apostles never gave forth any such Command or Ordinance; and therefore the Christians in the Apostles Days, their Souls were to be subject to the Higher Power, and to submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, who are for the Punishment of Evil-Doers (and the Apostle Paul tells you whom the Law was made against, and what Evil-Doers they were, that were, and

are to be *Punished*, as before mentioned) and for a *Praise* to them that do well. For the *Law* was not made against the *Righteous*, but to punish such *Sinners* and *Evil-Doers* as the *Apostle* speaks of, but not to punish *Christians* for their *Faith* and *Religion*, and for *Worshipping*, *Obeying* and *Serving* Almighty God that made them. For did not *Peter*, and *Paul*, and other *Apostles* and *Christians* suffer for Matters of Religion, and their *Obeying*, *Serving*, and *Worshipping* of God, who could not obey the *Doctrines*, *Ordinances*, or *Commandments* of the *Jews*, nor *Diana's*, nor of the *Romans*? For if he and the rest of the *Christians* and *Apostles* had, then they had not suffered.

And the *Apostle* saith (*Colossians* 2. 20, 21, 22.) *If ye be dead with Christ from the Rudiments of the World, why as though living in the World, are you subject to Ordinances, touch not, taste not, handle not? Which all are to perish with the using after the Commandments and Doctrines of Men.* So here you may see, there were *Doctrines*, *Ordinances*, and *Commandments* of *Men*, concerning *Religion* and *Worship*, that were not to be *Touched* with, nor *Tasted*, nor *Handled*: And yet the *Apostle* saith, *Submit yourselves to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's sake, which are for the punishment of Evil-doers.* So these *Ordinances* of *Men* for the punishment of such *Evil-doers*. (as before mentioned) every soul was to submit to that *higher Power*, for these were for the *praise* of them that do well: Yet they were not to submit to the *Ordinances*, *Commandments*, or *Doctrines* of *Men* in matters of *Faith*, *Religion* and *Worship*, nor to *touch*, *taste* nor *handle* them; and therefore the *Christians* suffered by the *Jews* and by the *Heathen-Romans*, and *Diana's Worshippers*; as you may see in the *Ten Persecutions*, and in the *Scriptures*. Therefore we desire you to make a *Distinction* betwixt the *Ordinances* of the *Higher Power*, their *Laws* and *Ordinances*, for the punishment of *Evil-doers*, as before mentioned; and likewise such *Ordinances*, *Commandments* and *Doctrines* of *Men*, that the *Christians* were not to be subject unto in matters of *Faith*, *Religion* and *Worship*, and were not to *touch*, *taste* nor *handle* them, and therefore they suffered.

And pray, What *Spirit* was and is this, that has made *Christians* to suffer for *Religion*, and *Serving* and *Worshipping* of God since the *Apostles* days? Not *Christ's* nor his *Apostles*; for *Christ* tells them plainly, that would have had *Fire* to come down from *Heaven* upon them that would not receive him, *Ye know not what spirit you are of.* And therefore, all in *Christendom*, that have *Persecuted* people for matters of *Faith & Religion*, & *serving* and *worshipping* God that made them, have they known what *spirit* they were and are of themselves? And therefore have such the *spirit* of *Christ*, that know not what *spirit* they are of themselves? For the *Apostle* says, *They that have not the spirit of Christ, are none of his*: And the same *Apostle* says, *He that is born of the Flesh, will persecute him that is born of the Spirit*: But we never read, that he that is born of the *spirit*, did persecute any about *Religion*, *Faith* and *Worship*, in the *New Testament*.

And so we desire you to come to the *spirit* of *Christ*, that you may make a *Distinction*, as the *Apostle* did, between those *Doctrines*, *Commandments* and *Ordinances* of *Men*, that are not to be *Touch'd*, *Tasted*, nor *Handled*; and the *Laws* and *Ordinances* of *Men* which the *Christians* are to submit themselves unto for the *Lord's* sake, for the *Punishment* of *Sinners* and *Evil-Doers*, as the *Apostle Paul* speaks of before; for he made a *Distinction*. And cease from *Imprisoning* and *Persecuting* both *Protestants* and others that profess *Christianity*, and give over *spoiling* their *Goods* for *Religion*, *Faith*, and *Worship*, and their *Serving* and *Worshipping* of God. And let the *Bishops* and *Priests* set open all the *Prison-Doors* for the *Prisoners* to go free, that through their means have been cast into *Prison*, and their *Goods* *Restored* them again, that through any of their means have been taken from them, for the *Relief* of their poor *Families*: and if not, see how you can prove your *Doctrines*, *Commandments*, and *Ordinances* of *Persecution* from *Christ* and his *Apostles* *Doctrine*; without which you must acknowledge your *Doctrines*, *Commandments*, and *Ordinances* to be of the *Ordinances* of *Men*, that have not known what *spirit* they were of, which are not to be *Touch'd*, *Tasted*, nor *Handled*, as the *Apostle* says. And if you would have us Conform to such *Doctrines*, *Ordinances*, and *Commandments* of *Men*, that do not know what *spirit* they are of themselves, and which (the *Apostle* says) are not to be *Touch'd*, *Tasted*, nor *Handled*, that *Act* contrary to the *Royal Law* of God, and *Do unto others*, as they would not have others do unto them: Would you be served so yourselves?

So we pray, Consider, and do unto others as you would have others do unto you; and love your Neighbour as your selves: and let nothing be in your *Pulpits*, but the sound of the Joyful, Glorious Gospel of *Life*, *Peace*, and *Salvation* to every Creature under *Heaven*; and freely if ye have received it, freely give it: For neither *Christ* nor the *Apostles* did preach up a *Doctrine*, *Ordinance*, or *Commandment* to *Imprison* to *Death*, *Persecute*, and *spoil* *Goods* of them that did not Conform to *Christ's* and the *Apostles* *Doctrine*; no, not so much as against *Blasphemers*, *Schismatics*, *Hereticks* and *Seducers*: Were not they to *Overcome Evil* with *Good*? and were not their *Weapons* to be *Spiritual*, and not *Carnal*? and are not *Goals* and *Carnal Weapons*

(to Force People to Ordinances, Doctrines, and Commandments of Men) contrary to the spiritual Weapons and Armour that the Apostles warr'd withal in the Primitive Times?

Therefore we pray you again to Consider, what ground you have out of the New Testament from Christ and his Apostles, who profess your selves Christians, to *spoil Goods, cast into Prison (yea many to Death)* and to war with *Carnal Weapons and Armour* against such tender Consciences in matters of difference in *Religion and Faith*, and that do Obey, Serve and Worship in Spirit and Truth, Almighty God that made them? Would not You have Liberty for your Tender Consciences? And if so, why should you be against Others, that they should not have the same Liberty of their Tender Consciences, that Dissent from you, as you would have your selves? And if not, do you fulfill the Royal Law of God, *To do unto others, as you would have them do unto you*? And doth not the Lord say, *I will have MERCY and not Sacrifice*? So you may see, that it is *Mercy* that the Lord looks for, who is *Merciful, &c.* And doth not the Lord require of Man, *To do Justice, to love MERCY, and to walk humbly with God*? Mich. 5. 8.

London, the 30th. of the 1st. Month,
called March, 1685.

Signed in Behalf of our
Suffering Friends,

Thomas Robertson,
Richard Bland,
John Bowater,
William Ingram.

FINIS.

